

Mormonism—It's Founder and Beginnings

1 John 4:1-2; 2 John 7-10

Visit from the Mormon missionaries on Friday afternoon.

THE FOUNDER OF MORMONISM

Joseph Smith was the founder of the Mormon church. He is the “key” to Mormonism.

1. Brigham Young, the successor of Joseph Smith, stated, “No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.”
2. Brigham Young also said, “Every spirit that confesseth that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of antichrist.”
3. In the Doctrines and Covenants 135:3 we read these humble words, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”

THE VISIONS OF JOSEPH SMITH

Mormonism is based upon two “visions” of Joseph Smith.

I. Joseph Smith's first “vision”

- A. According to Smith, in 1820, he went into woods to “pray about” what church to join. Suddenly two “personages” appeared. One pointed to the other and said, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”
- B. The “personage” told Joseph Smith not to join any church because “they were all wrong... all their creeds were an abomination... that those professors were all corrupt.”
 1. A total apostasy of all churches is essential to the premise that the Mormon church is the restoration of “the one true church.” If there were no total apostasy, no restoration would be necessary.

2. While some churches have gone into apostasy, God has always had a remnant of true Bible believing churches since the book of Acts.
3. Paul wrote, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, would without end. Amen”* (Eph. 3:21). If the church went into apostasy, there was a period when glory was not given to Christ in the church.

II. The second “vision.”

On September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith was supposedly visited in his bedroom by a so-called angel named “Moroni.” The account is given in *The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:29-46:

A brilliant light appeared in his room and immediately a personage emerged at his bedside. This personage identified himself as “Moroni” who was sent from God to give Smith a work to do. According to Smith’s account, Moroni said, “There was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; Also that there were two stones in silver bows and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

Moroni told Smith that when he got the golden plates, he should not show them to anyone except those to those he was commanded. Then Smith had a vision of where the plates were buried.

It was from these so-called golden plates that Joseph Smith supposedly translated *The Book of Mormon*.

- ➡ This is exactly how Islam was founded. An angel revealed the new religion to Mohammed 600 years after the death of Christ. Mormons also hold in common with Islam the doctrine of multiple wives in this life and in the life to come. Thus, neither religion is Christian.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

1. First, it should be noted that Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Is it possible the “Moroni” was really a devil or seducing spirit?
2. Second, we have the completed Bible (Rev. 22:17-18). We do not need any other book.
3. Third, Moroni preached another Gospel (cf. Gal. 1:8-9).

➡ The Mormon missionaries asked me if I had read the book of Mormon. I told them I did. In fact, I even showed them my copy. They asked me what I thought of the Book of Mormon. I said, “It was interesting fiction,” but I think Louis L’amour novels are much better.

A. Mormons believe The Book of Mormon is the Word of God. But, it makes no claim of divine inspiration for itself. It’s writers make statements like, “I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred.” (1 Nephi 19:6). “...we have written this record *according to our knowledge*” (Mormon 9:32).

1. These statements are a far cry from the bold statements made by the writers of the New Testament “*having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee...*” (Luke 1:3). “*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Pet. 1:21). See also 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
2. Mormons believe you and I are fools if we use only the Bible. 2 Nephi 29:6, “Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible.” Also 2 Nephi 29:10 —“Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.”

B. Actually Mormons have four books they consider authoritative: The Bible (in so far as it is translated correctly), the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. They also believe even more books can be added in the future.

- Mormons do not believe in the preservation of Scripture as taught in Psalm 12:6-7. In 1 Nephi 13:26 we read, “Behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away...”

C. Where did The Book of Mormon come from?

It has been contested that the plot and names in The Book of Mormon actually originated from a 19th century story by a Presbyterian minister named Solomon Spaulding about the origin of the American Indians.

During 1816 and early 1817, Joseph Smith worked on the farm of William Sabine, Spaulding’s brother-in-law. When Spaulding died in 1816, his widow went to live on her brother’s farm. She would read from her husband’s manuscript during meal times and when guests would visit while Joseph Smith intently listened.

He remembered the plot and many of the names. Another man named Sidney Rigdon is said to have found the manuscript of this fictional novel of Solomon Spaulding in a printing office in Pittsburgh. He became associated with Joseph Smith and is likely the two of them collaborated in fabricating The Book of Mormon and concocted the story about an angel and buried golden plates.

No archeological evidence supports the Book of Mormon. The book of Mormon named 38 ancient cities on this continent, but there is no evidence they existed. Where are the sites of the “many mighty cities” mentioned in Ether 9:23? No ruins or relics have been found on this continent to support the vast civilization mentioned in The Book of Mormon.

The Smithsonian Institute issued a statement in 1979 regarding The Book of Mormon: “Smithsonian archeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book.”

- ➡ The Book of Mormon has been “revised” 3,000 times since it’s first publication (see 1 Nephi 11:21, 32; 13:40)

The Book of Mormon versus the King James Bible

1. Alma 7:10 says Jesus was born in Jerusalem. King James Bible says Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-7).
 2. Is salvation by grace or works? (2 Nephi 25:23 versus Ephesians 2:8-9; Rom. 11:6).
 3. 3 Nephi 8:19, 23 teaches when Jesus was crucified, darkness was on the earth for three days. Luke 23:44 says the darkness only lasted three hours.
 4. The gospel according to 3 Nephi 27:13-21 compared to the gospel according to the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:1-4 cf. Gal. 1:8-9).
- ➡ Can we know if The Book of Mormon is true? Isaiah 8:20 says, *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* We must search the Scriptures whether those things are so (Acts 17:11).

MORMON’S FINAL AUTHORITY: To the Mormon, deciding truth is a matter of emotional feelings. Moroni 10:4 says, “When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you...”

In D&C 9:8, “You must study it out in your mind, then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall **feel** that it is right.”

When the Mormon missionaries asked me **if I prayed about the Book of Mormon**, I told them I didn’t have to. God has already given me a burning in my bosom that the King James Bible the perfect Word of God and all I need.

The conclusion is The final authority for a Bible believing Christian is the Holy Scriptures. The final authority for the Mormon is his own subjective feelings!

➡ Next week we will look at the Mormon’s view of God and Jesus.